

Legislation Will Make Health Care More Affordable, Hold Insurance Companies Accountable

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) tonight released the following statement regarding House passage of the health care reform bill. The congressman voted in favor of the legislation.

"Tonight, our country took a bold step forward in the effort to ensure that every American has access to quality, affordable health insurance. While this bill does not go as far I would have preferred, it nevertheless represents the most significant and positive piece of health care reform legislation since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. My vote in favor of this bill is one of the most important votes I have cast during my time in Congress.

"For years, I have listened to stories from upstate New Yorkers who have struggled with the rising cost of premiums and an endless stream of deductibles, co-pays and fees. I have talked with small business owners who struggle to provide good benefits to their employees, but have remained powerless in the face of rising costs in a broken health care marketplace. I have heard from seniors who still find it hard to afford the life-saving prescription drugs they need. And even more concerning are the countless stories from those who have fallen ill and then into bankruptcy or other difficult circumstances - even though they thought they had good coverage. Now, after two generations of waiting, those who have carried the physical pain and economic burden of our broken health care system will finally begin to see the relief they so desperately need.

"For the 415,000 residents I represent who already have health insurance, this bill provides immediate safeguards from insurance company abuses and will improve coverage. For those people and families who are self-employed, unemployed, or work for a small business, they will have access to the same types of private health insurance choices that members of Congress have through a competitive health insurance market that keeps costs down. Up to 158,000 families and 15,100 small businesses in my district will receive tax credits to help them afford coverage. Once the bill goes into effect, over 109,000 Medicare beneficiaries will see a dramatic improvement in their benefits and will pay nothing for preventive care, and 68,000 young adults will be able to obtain coverage through their parents' insurance plans until their 26th birthday. This bill will also extend coverage to 47,000 of my constituents who have, for far too long, gone without care, and guarantee that more than 10,000 of those I represent are no longer denied coverage simply because they have a pre-existing condition.

"These essential reforms will not only alleviate the economic burden of health care felt by families, small businesses, seniors and young adults, but will also help to address our nation's fiscal woes, reducing the budget deficit by \$143 billion in the first ten years and then by another \$1.2 trillion in the following decade by cutting waste, fraud, abuse and overpayments to insurance companies.

"While the comprehensive health care reform bill we passed tonight will not solve every problem that exists in our health care system, it remains a landmark achievement in the effort to ensure comprehensive, high-quality and affordable coverage for every American."